

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose

The Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities and establishes management standards and guidelines for the Tongass National Forest. It describes resource [management practices](#), levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for different kinds of resource management.

The Forest Plan embodies the provisions of the [National Forest Management Act](#), the implementing regulations, and other guiding documents. The multiple-use goals and objectives, and the [Land Use Prescriptions](#) and standards and guidelines, constitute a statement of the Forest Plan's [management direction](#). However, the projected outputs and rates of [implementation](#) are dependent on the annual budget process and other factors.

This Forest Plan is a revision of the previous Tongass Land Management Plan, which was approved in 1979 and amended in 1986 and 1991. It entirely replaces the direction in the 1979 Plan, as of the effective date of this revised Plan.

Relationship to Other Documents

This Forest Plan sets forth in detail the direction for managing the land and resources of the Tongass National Forest. The Forest Plan is a result of extensive analysis, which is addressed in the accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS discusses the planning process and the analysis procedures used to develop the Forest Plan, describes and analyzes the alternatives considered in detail, and discusses how the [public issues](#) identified during the process helped shape these alternatives. Public issues were an integral part of developing the revised Forest Plan.

Specific activities and projects will be planned and implemented to carry out the direction in this Forest Plan. Schedules of some activities and projects are included in Appendix L. These are dynamic and may be updated frequently. The Forest will perform environmental analyses on most of these projects and activities. This subsequent environmental analysis will use the data and analysis in the Forest Plan and environmental impact statement. Environmental analysis of projects will be tiered to the Forest Plan FEIS.

All future plans and administrative activities will be based on the Forest Plan (or the Plan may be amended - see Chapter 5). Most existing resource management plans for the Tongass National Forest are already a part of, and consistent with, this revised Forest Plan. Several [Wilderness](#) Plans were developed since the 1979 Forest Plan. Direction in the existing approved Wilderness plans which is consistent with this Forest Plan is hereby incorporated. Prior approved plans include those for the Stikine-LeConte, Admiralty (Kootznoowoo), South Baranof, Endicott River, and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wildernesses. Further direction for Wilderness management is contained in the Regional Supplement to Forest Service Manual 2320. [Off-Highway Vehicle](#) (OHV) plans are developed on an as-needed basis. The Forest is designated open to OHV's unless site-specific closures are made. The Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan for the Juneau Area (Juneau Ranger District, November 1985) is incorporated here by reference. The

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Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area Management Plan (1996) is also incorporated by reference.

Plan Organization

What is Forest Planning? Let's compare it to something that is familiar: land use zoning for a community. In a community, certain areas are zoned for commercial uses (stores), industrial uses (factories), and residential areas (where homes may be built). Each of these "zones" has certain uses that may occur there, and others that may not. Many different uses may apply to the same zone. Some zoning requirements may apply only to specific areas of a zone.

In Forest Planning, we call the zoning process "*allocation or [land allocation](#)*." Certain areas of the Forest are allocated (zoned) to [Land Use Designations](#) for different uses. The description of the uses to which the land may be put and the activities which may occur there is called a [management prescription](#). Each management prescription gives general direction on what may occur within the area allocated to the corresponding Land Use Designation, the standards for accomplishing each activity, and the guidelines on how to go about accomplishing the standards. These are called the "*Land Use Designation Standards and Guidelines*." Some of these standards and guidelines may be common to many areas of the Forest. These are called [Forest-wide Standards & Guidelines](#).

Standards and guidelines are designed so that all activities are integrated to meet [land allocation](#) objectives. Standards and guidelines represent minimum achievement levels, but do not limit achievements: higher objectives may always be attained. For instance, if a land use prescription allows activities to visually dominate the landscape ([Visual Quality Objective: Modification](#)), then activities which do not visually dominate are always acceptable ([Visual Quality Objectives: Retention](#) and [Partial retention](#)). Standards and guidelines are also intended to be used in conjunction with National and Regional policies, standards and guidelines contained in Forest Service manuals and handbooks, and the Alaska Regional Guide.

The locations of [Land Use Designation](#) boundaries (as indicated on the Forest Plan map) are approximate due to the map scale used, and the programmatic nature of the allocations. Some boundary adjustments may be necessary as specific projects are implemented under the Forest Plan. These adjustments will normally be made through insignificant Forest Plan amendments.

The Forest Plan is organized into several chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 1 explains the components of Forest Plan [management direction](#), and the priority amongst this direction, gives a brief description of the Tongass, and summarizes the current management situation. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 present the major components of management direction for the Forest. These are described below.

Chapter 5 discusses Forest Plan implementation, and the process used to amend or revise a Forest Plan. Chapter 6 is the monitoring and evaluation plan. Chapter 7 is a glossary.

Several appendices are also included, including the timber suitability determination (Appendix A) and a discussion of research and information needs (Appendix B).

A discussion of how the Forest Plan revision process addressed the [public issues](#), and the [management concerns](#) ("need for change"), is included in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Forest Plan Management Direction

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the Forest Plan present the majority of the direction for managing the Tongass National Forest. The [management direction](#) of this plan conforms with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and the Alaska Regional Guide. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (Chapter 6), and the determination of Timber Resource Land Suitability (Appendix A), also provide important direction.

The primary management direction for the Forest consists of the following integrated components:

Forest Multiple-Use Goals (Chapter 2) - The multiple-use and other goals established during the planning process to guide Forest management.

Forest Management Objectives (Chapter 2) - These include narrative objectives for specific resources and the levels of [goods and services](#) (resource outputs) that are anticipated during the first decade of Forest Plan implementation.

[Management prescriptions](#) (Chapter 3) - Each [Land Use Designation](#) has a management prescription. Each prescription includes goals, objectives, and a desired future condition, and [management practices](#), standards, and guidelines by resource. The geographic areas allocated to each Land Use Designation for the Forest Plan are displayed on the Forest Plan map.

[Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines](#) (Chapter 4) - These are the standards and guidelines that apply to all, or most, areas of the Forest. Each management prescription includes a list of those that apply to that Land Use Designation.

Together, these components of Forest direction, along with the [Land Use Designation](#) map, establish a management framework that governs the location, design, and scheduling of all Forest management activities. Within the management framework, project-level planning is undertaken to achieve Forest Plan implementation.

Priority of Direction

Every effort has been made to achieve consistency between the components of [management direction](#) just described, and between Forest Plan direction and higher-level direction (e.g., law). However, conflicting or contradictory direction is still possible. If a conflict or discrepancy between direction should occur, the following priority among direction will apply:

1. Higher-level direction.
2. Within the components of Forest Plan management direction, the management prescription standards and guidelines for each Land Use Designation take precedence over the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines applied to that same designation, should any conflicts occur. Any summaries of these standards and guidelines (such as in the map legends) are not considered direction.
3. For all projects and activities considered, the standards and guidelines for each management prescription will be used, regardless of the levels of outputs or numbers of projects achieved, and regardless of actual budget allocations. Standards, which can usually be identified by words such as

"must" or "will," are mandatory requirements or minimums which must be met. Project-level analysis may determine that additional requirements beyond these minimum are necessary. Guidelines, the majority of the direction, are not absolute requirements, but ways of achieving the standards or meeting other needs of the resource.

One purpose of monitoring and evaluation (see Chapter 6) is to assure that [management direction](#) is being carried out, and that the outputs and schedules are being achieved. If monitoring shows continued conflicts or problems in implementing the management direction, then a Forest Plan amendment may be necessary.

Forest Location and Description

The 17-million acre Tongass National Forest is located in Southeast Alaska, a part of the Alexander Archipelago, and encompasses about seven percent of the State's total land area. The Tongass extends from Dixon Entrance in the south to Yakutat in the North, and is bordered on the east by Canada and on the west by the Gulf of Alaska. It extends approximately 500 miles north to south, and approximately 120 miles east to west at its widest point. Figure 1-1 is a vicinity map of the Tongass.

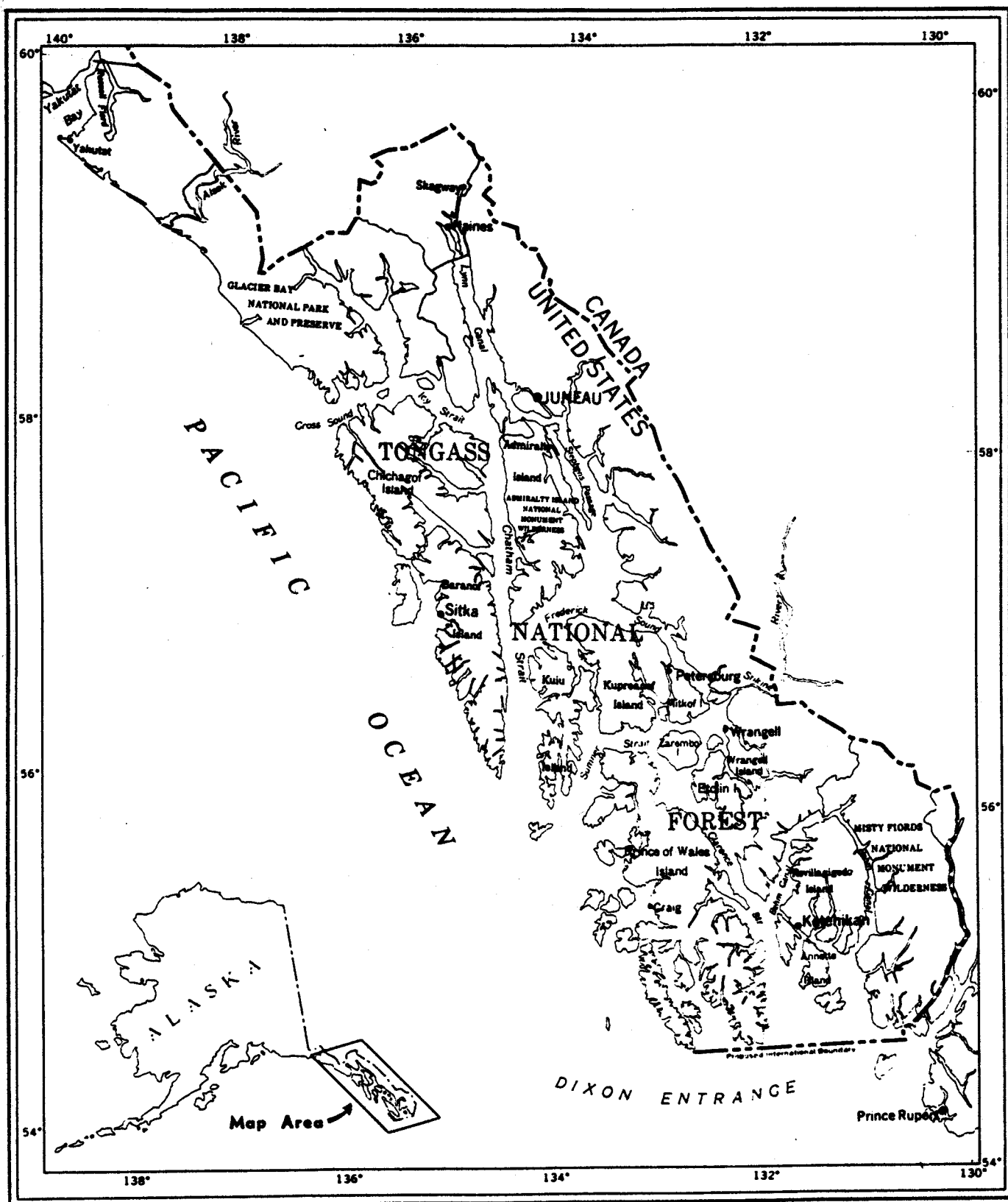
The Tongass includes a narrow mainland strip of steep, rugged mountains and icefields, and over 1,000 offshore islands. Together, the islands and mainland equal nearly 11,000 miles of meandering shoreline, with numerous bays and coves. A system of seaways separate the many islands and provides a protected waterway called the Inside Passage. Federal lands comprise about 95 percent of Southeast Alaska, with about 80 percent in the Tongass National Forest (and most of the rest in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve). The remaining land is held in State, Native and local community private ownerships.

Most of the area of the Tongass is wild and undeveloped. About 70,000 people inhabit Southeast Alaska, most living in 33 communities located on island or mainland coasts. Only eight of the communities have populations greater than 1,000 persons. Most of these communities are surrounded by, or adjacent to, National Forest land. Just three towns are connected to other parts of the mainland by road: Haines and Skagway to the north, and Hyder to the south.

The economies of Southeast Alaska's communities are largely dependent on the Tongass National Forest to provide natural resources for uses such as fishing, timber harvesting, recreation, tourism, mining and [subsistence](#). Maintaining the abundant natural resources of the Forest while also providing opportunities for their use is a major concern of Southeast Alaska residents.

Because of its immense size, the Tongass National Forest is divided into three Administrative Areas, each with its own Forest Supervisor: the Chatham Area with its Supervisor's Office at Sitka, the Stikine Area with its Supervisor's Office at Petersburg, and the Ketchikan Area with its Supervisor's Office in Ketchikan. There are nine Ranger Districts, with offices in Yakutat, Juneau, Hoonah, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangell, Thorne Bay, Craig, and Ketchikan. There are also two National Monuments, Admiralty Island and Misty Fiords, with offices in Juneau and Ketchikan.

Figure 1-1
Tongass National Forest Vicinity Map



Summary of the "AMS"

The supply and demand conditions for major resources of the Forest was evaluated during the "analysis of the management situation" (AMS) in 1988 and 1989, and reevaluated after passage of the [Tongass Timber Reform Act](#) (TTRA) (November 1990). The maximum potentials for supplying selected major resources, the actual supplies available under the previous (1979, as amended) Forest Plan, and the anticipated demands for these resources, were determined. These resources are timber (first-decade timber harvest), fish ([anadromous fish](#)), recreation, wildlife ([old-growth](#) habitat), and wilderness (potential from existing unroaded areas). Chapter 3 of the FEIS presents an in-depth evaluation of supply and demand for these and other resources, and also discusses opportunities for the use and development of resources. Following is a brief summary.

Supply

Resource potential (supply) is a general indication of how much of a particular resource might be available. The maximum resource supply potentials, subject only to meeting resource protection requirements, were determined for each resource separately (since they could not all be achieved simultaneously).

- a. A maximum first-decade average annual timber harvest level of approximately 700 million board feet.
- b. A commercial fish [habitat capability](#) increased to about 115 million pounds per year during the first decade.
- c. A [recreation capacity](#) (including tourism) of about 4.9 million [Recreation Visitor Days](#) annually.
- d. A maximum of 8.7 million acres of [old-growth](#) forest retained.
- e. A maximum of 9.45 million acres of unroaded lands that could be designated as wilderness.

The production potentials for these same resources under the previous plan (after TTRA) were:

- a. A maximum average annual timber harvest level of 450 million board feet.
- b. A commercial fish habitat capability of about 115 million pounds per year.
- c. A recreation capacity (including tourism) of 4.9 million Recreation Visitor Days annually.
- d. A maximum of 8.7 million acres of old-growth forest that could be retained.
- e. A maximum of 9.45 million acres of unroaded lands that could be designated as wilderness.

Demand

Projections of resource demand give an indication of how much of a resource might be needed or desired. A few key points are summarized here.

- a. Fish - The demand for commercial fish (about 95 percent of total demand) is expected to generally exceed current potentials for all species.
- b. Recreation - Recreation use, including tourism, is predicted to increase over the next decade, but will remain well below the Forest's current capacity of 4.9 million [Recreation Visitor Days](#).
- c. Wildlife - Hunting demand for [old-growth](#)-related game species is expected to increase over the next decade.
- d. Timber - Market demand is expected to be lower than in the previous planning period, particularly during the first part of the planning period as

the timber industry adjusts to the closure of the pulp mills in Southeast Alaska.

- e. Wilderness - Additional Wilderness was considered during debate on the [Tongass Timber Reform Act](#), which added 0.3 million acres of Wilderness to the Tongass (for a total of 5.8 million acres). No additional Wilderness needs are anticipated for the next decade.

Use and Development Opportunities

- a. Fish - Opportunities to increase [anadromous fish](#) production through habitat improvement (both [rehabilitation](#) and enhancement) exist throughout the Forest.
- b. Recreation - Opportunities to increase roaded recreation and tourism use, and access to both developed and [dispersed recreation](#) areas, exist primarily in areas with suitable and available timber lands. Opportunities to provide for unroaded recreation and tourism through non-timber designations exist in the 9.45 million acres of unroaded lands outside Wilderness. Opportunities to increase semi-primitive motorized uses are limited. There are many opportunities for developing new recreation facilities or improving existing ones.
- c. Wildlife - Opportunities to improve wildlife habitat associated with [old-growth](#) forests are limited to the management of second-growth timber to achieve old-growth characteristics. Opportunities to maintain existing old-growth forest exist on approximately 8.7 million acres.
- d. Timber - Opportunities for the management of the timber resource for wood production are limited to the 2.4 million acres of suitable and available timber lands outside Wilderness or other legislated areas. Opportunities to increase wood production on these lands through thinnings or related practices are limited, since nearly all the [suitable forest land](#) is currently in an [old-growth](#) condition. Future production may increase where second-growth is managed for periodic harvests.
- e. Wilderness - Additional Wilderness for the Tongass could be designated from the 9.45 million acres of currently unroaded land outside Wilderness.